

# NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued weekly. Subscription price, \$4.00 per year. Entered as second class matter at the N. Y. Post Office by Special & Single.

No. 43.

NEW YORK, October 23, 1897.

Price 5 Cents.

682 WEST ADAMS ST. NEAR MORGAN

CHICAGO ILL.

## NICK CARTER ARRESTED BY MISTAKE OR THE MAN ON THE WINDOW SILL



By THE AUTHOR OF  
"NICK CARTER"

"HOLD UP YOUR HANDS AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT!"



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*Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1897 by Street & Smith, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress,  
Washington, D. C.*

*Entered as second class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.*

*Issued weekly.*

*Subscription price, \$2.50 per year.*

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No 43. STREET & SMITH, Publishers. NEW YORK. 29 Rose St., N. Y. 5 Cents

## Nick Carter Arrested by Mistake

OR,

### The Man on the Window Sill.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

#### CHAPTER I.

##### AN OPENING FOR BUSINESS.

"What next?"

"Blessed if I know."

"We're too near broke for any large scheme."

"Yes; things haven't been coming our way lately."

The last speaker drew his hand from his pocket and held out a few small silver coins.

"That's the size of the bank-roll," he said, grimly.

He was a man who would by common consent have the right of way in any deserted street after nightfall.

He was tall and strong, and quick-motioed.

His eyes were large, black and brilliant; his nose had the thick middle

hump one frequently sees in that of a vicious horse; his lips were thin, curling at the corners, and cruel; his head was large and lumpy over the eyes and behind the ears, and was narrow and sloping in front.

Surely Neil Hill—known to the thieves burglars, and stage and train robbers of the Pacific slope as the "Convict"—was a man to let alone.

At the time of the above conversation, he had been out of prison only a few days.

While collecting "fares" without the authority of the officers of a Middle State railway, he had been captured and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Now he was out again, and ready for any desperate deed.

His companion was an ordinary looking man, with red hair and mustache, light-blue eyes and a weak chin.



Carl Boyd would have passed anywhere for a very ordinary mechanic, but he had a record as a daring lawbreaker second only to that of his companion.

Had the officers of San Francisco known that the two men were plotting in their midst, they would have placed every available detective in the city on a quiet hunt for them.

The two desperadoes were talking in a small boarding-house with a saloon attachment, where they occupied a room on the second floor.

"We've got to do something right away," said Boyd, looking contemptuously at the small display of silver in his companion's palm. "Before we've been here a week the police will be piping off every move we make."

"Right you are," replied Neil Hill, with an oath. "I'll pump a lot of 'em full of lead before I'll serve another term in prison. As a rule, the Pacific coast detectives are no good, but there's no telling what cursed luck we might run up against."

"There seems to be only one detective in the world that you have any respect for," said Boyd, watching his companion's face for the least sign of displeasure.

"Who's that?"

"Nick Carter."

"Nick Carter! He isn't a detective, because he isn't a man! He's a devil! Bullets curve around him, and knives won't touch him! He's every where at once, and has more luck than a cowboy playing faro-bank!"

"Well, I guess we're out of his reach," said Boyd. "He has too much business

to attend to in New York to show up out here."

"Suppose we levy an assessment on a bank," suggested Hill, after a short silence. "A nervy dash about the middle of the afternoon would put us in funds for a long time."

"It's a trifle risky. Cashiers are mighty handy with their guns out this way. T Still, I'm ready for anything you decide upon."

In a short time the men passed down stairs, and, walking up to the bar, ordered whisky.

As they stood leaning against the bar, two men in soiled and greasy working clothes lounged in and sat down by one of the small card-tables to drink their beer.

"We'll get no more booze," said one of the men, as he finished his schooner of beer, "until the ghost walks out at Emery's."

"We won't if I have to buy it," said his companion, "for I've got just money enough to get back home with. I'm always broke a week before pay-day."

"I'd like to have the bundle Gilson will carry out to the Judson Iron Works day after to-morrow," said the first speaker.

"It must take quite a wad to pay al the hands out there. There's an army of 'em."

"Something over fifteen thousand dollars. If I had that much money I think I'd take better care of it than the cashier does."

"He never lost any, did he?"

"No, but he's liable to most any day."



"How does he get it out there?"

"Chucks it into a couple of bags and takes it along in the car with him. I tell you it's risky."

"Does he go out alone?"

"Oh, he usually takes a clerk out with him, but what does that amount to? There'll be trouble some day."

Hill nudged his companion significantly.

Both robbers had overheard every word!

"I don't know about that," said one of the men. "Gilson probably carries a gun, and the clerk another, and then the train they go out on is always crowded."

"What does all that amount to?" demanded the other, scornfully. "I'll gamble I could walk into that car, get the drop on Gilson and his clerk, and back out with the money-bags without a cross word being said!"

Again Hill nudged his companion.

"Pretty good scheme that," he said, in a low tone, as Boyd turned and faced him for a moment.

"I should say so. These fellows have mapped it out for us in fine shape. Suppose we buy them a drink?"

"And so give them a chance to remember our faces! You must be going crazy! Let's step around to the end of the bar, so they won't see our faces in the mirror."

"Well, I'm going to make tracks for the works," said one of the beer-drinkers. "I'll get my pay at one o'clock Saturday, and then we'll have a little whirl."

"Don't you get your stuff until one?"

"No; the cashier leaves here on the

Berkeley train at eleven o'clock, and they can't make up the roll much before one."

The workmen paid for their beer, and walked out of the place.

"Talk about luck?" said Boyd, as the two desperadoes stood in their room again. "We're pets of fortune this time, sure enough! What a head for schemes that fellow must have!"

"Oh, it's easy enough to plan a robbery," said Hill, "but it's the dead cool nerve that counts in the long run."

"But this scheme is easy enough."

"It is easy enough to get hold of the money, but it may puzzle us to get away with it."

"Yes, I suppose it will make a big sensation, and set plenty of officers at work. It's a big break to hold up a crowded suburban train in daylight!"

"You bet it is! Every square foot of ground in this city and Oakland will be watched for the next month."

Hill walked nervously up and down the floor for some moments, seemingly buried in deep thought.

"What you got on your mind?" demanded Boyd, impatiently, seeing that his companion evinced no desire to become communicative. "Cough it up, whatever it is. Two can plan better than one."

"It's just this," said Hill. "Before we get this stuff we've got to find a place to hide it until after the row subsides. And then there may be some shooting, and one of us may be hurt. We've got to provide for that, too."

"How can we do that? You can't doctor wounds in advance, can you, old man?"



"No; but we can provide a place to lay quiet in."

"Oh, that's it! Well, what's the matter with Mother Beers' place? She's a little down on me, but I guess you can make the riddle."

"You mean the old den down near Tenth street?"

"Of course. Where shall we make the break?"

"I presume the best place to call the cashier down is at the station at B street. It must be done when the train is not in motion, for we shall have to jump out mighty quick. We shall have to get a horse and carriage somewhere, too. We can never get away on foot. One of us might ride out on the train, and locate the men, and the other must drive out to B street, and get on there. It will be sharp work for about a minute."

"Of course it will, and we want to carry boiler plate under our vests. For all we know, every man in the car may shoot."

"You black your face, then, and go out on the train, and I'll get on at B street. Now I'll go and find a place to drive to after we get our hands on the fifteen thousand dollars."

"Well, you know what to say to Mother Beers when you get there. She's a cranky old witch, and that girl she keeps around there is a little spitfire, so be careful. I'll look after extra suits and boiler-plate while you are gone."

Leaving the boarding-house with his face rather too well muffled for that June day, Hill proceeded across the city to the residence of Mother Beers.

The house was by no means a large or

pretentious one, and the outlaw's fine knock brought the woman he was the quest of to the door, which was fastened with a chain on the inside.

"So you're out again?"

The old woman eyed Hill keenly as she spoke, and made no motion to open the door beyond the limit of the chain.

"Yes, don't stand there all day. Let me in!"

After some delay the outlaw was admitted, and in a short time was engaged in earnest conversation with the old woman, who had evidently had business of a similar character with him before.

"It's all right," said the woman, as Hill arose to take his departure, "but you must keep mighty quiet if you come here. I'm all right in this neighborhood and I don't want to be routed out again."

Hill made the required promise, and stepped out into the hall.

As he did so an old man, whose face showed many traces of dissipation, blundered stupidly against him.

The outlaw raised his open hand, and with an oath on his lips, struck the old fellow a blow which sent him staggering against the wall.

"You're always in the way!" he muttered, turning to the door.

But he was not to escape so easily.

As he stood with his hand on the knob, a dish-pan, a broom, and several other articles dear to the heart of the domestic woman, shot through the air and either struck him or fell against the door with a great clatter.

"What the devil is all this?" he shouted, facing about, pistol in hand, just in



fine to catch a stove-handle on the side of the head.

As he looked the hand holding the weapon fell to his side.

He found himself confronted only by a young girl of sixteen or seventeen.

Having exhausted her supply of weapons, the girl now stood facing him with a flushed face and angry eyes.

"We gives it out, and gives it out strong," she said, in a voice far from coarse or unwomanly, "that we can do all the bangin' around in this house, an' we makes it stick, too!"

The girl was very pretty, even in her ungovernable rage.

While not far from the medium height, her form, though slender in appearance, was well rounded and muscular. Her hair, now flying in heavy masses about her neck and shoulders, was of a rich, glossy brown; her eyes were dark blue, and her oval face would have been perfect only for the firm, square chin and a plentiful sprinkling of freckles.

She was clad in a faded dress of calico, touched up at the throat and waist by bits of violet ribbon.

"Why, my dear girl," began the outlaw, "I have——"

"Dear nothin'! Git out! I'll teach you to strike Uncle Ben!"

The girl would undoubtedly have renewed the warfare at this point had not the old woman darted forward and seized her fiercely by the wrist.

"Go to your room, you jade!" screamed the woman. "I'll settle with you directly."

"You'd better do it now, while you've

got help," said the girl. "You shall never beat me again, Mother Beers!"

"We'll see about that," said the old woman, grimly, as the girl, half-sobbing now that the excitement was over, slowly mounted the stairs.

"She's grown wonderfully since I've been gone," said Hill, almost at a loss how to break the silence, "and her temper hasn't improved any, either."

"She's a little devil!" said the woman, fiercely. "I'll give her a good one to-night to pay for this."

An hour later, when the old woman, armed with a heavy cudgel, stalked into the girl's room, she found it empty.

The girl had fled.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE ROBBERY.

John Gilson, secretary and cashier of the Judson Iron Works, threw in the last coin and proceeded to tie up two strong bags.

One contained fourteen thousand dollars in gold, and weighed about forty-five pounds.

The other contained one thousand dollars in silver, and weighed sixty pounds.

It was the morning of the 11th of June, 1892, two days after the occurrence of the events recorded in the last chapter.

"I shall be glad when the stuff is off my hands," the cashier said, throwing himself back in his chair.

"It does seem a trifle unsafe to carry such an amount of cash in a crowded car."

The speaker was Harry Mortenson, a clerk who had been detailed to accom-



pany the cashier on his pay-day trip to the Judson Iron Works at a small station called Emery's.

"Oh," was the reply, "I've made the trip every second Saturday in the month for a long time, and nothing out of common has happened. Still, I'm always glad when the men are paid off."

"Yes, I suppose so. I'm not stuck on his pay-day job myself."

In due time the men, with the money in their possession, crossed the bay and took seats in the Berkeley train.

As they crossed the bay neither of the men noticed a medium-sized man with a very dirty face and a black mustache, who made it his business to keep very close to them.

The captain of the boat noticed the fellow, but, thinking that he had been detailed to guard the treasure, he said nothing to the cashier or his clerk about the matter.

All the cars were well filled that morning.

A picnic at Shell Mound had brought out a large crowd of pleasure-seekers.

Gilson and his clerk occupied the fourth seat from the front on the west side of the second car from the locomotive.

On the seat facing them lay the two bags containing fifteen thousand dollars in gold and silver.

The passengers on the train had no knowledge of what the bags contained, and so paid no attention to them.

When the train left Oakland at 11:24, Conductor Fred Graves noticed a man in a blue blouse, overalls, and a low, flat white hat get on board.

His face was very dirty, and he had the

general appearance of a machine hand who had neglected to wash up.

He boarded the third car, the one at the rear of the one in which the cashier and his clerk sat guarding the small fortune in coin.

After taking his seat, he looked boldly around the car.

Of course the inevitable small child was on board the train.

No patch of American life would be complete without the small child.

Of course her bright eyes roved about the car, and of course she talked about what she saw.

"Mamma, see what a dirty face that man has," she said.

For a second time that day the man in disguise had attracted attention.

The mother glanced around as she answered:

"Yes, dear; it looks as if he has blacked it on purpose."

The man eyed the pair sharply for a moment, and then pressed the face which had attracted the child's attention closely against the car window.

In a short time the train began to slow up for the station at B street.

Then the man with the dirty face and the white flat hat arose and stepped out on the front platform of the car.

Hardly sixty feet from the track, and in plain sight, stood a horse hitched to a light top-buggy.

It had stood there nearly two hours, and a tall man, dressed in a long, straw-colored linen duster, a pair of blue trousers, and a black derby hat had, during all that time been pacing up and down about the station.



Before the train stopped the man in the linen duster joined the man with the white flat hat on the platform.

The station at B street is a very lonely place.

The depot building is close down by the bay, and the nearest structure is three or four blocks away.

As the two men stood on the platform the car the only persons in sight were two men who were loading a wagon with mining sand not far away from the depot.

The men stood on the platform only an instant.

The man with the dirty face pointed toward the forward car, and they entered and passed together down the aisle.

Just at the door the conductor took their tickets and passed on out of the car.

As the men advanced down the aisle each threw his right hand under his coat.

In a moment they stood by the seat where the money lay.

Quick as lightning each seized one of the bags of coin!

Gilson and Mortenson each drew back as if for a sudden spring, but the robbers were too quick for them.

"Hold up your hands!"

"And be quick about it!"

The two sharp sentences came almost together.

Gilson and his assistant obeyed.

There was nothing else for them to do.

The daring robbers were holding cocked revolvers within a foot of their frightened faces.

At first the passengers did not comprehend what was going on before their very eyes.

But there was no mistaking that sharp command.

"Hold up your hands!"

It was all done in an instant.

Two women occupying seats at the very elbows of the robbers were even too scared to cry out.

In the rear end of the car half a dozen people made a great rustling and bumping by trying to crawl under the seats.

No one offered immediate resistance. No one raised hand or voice. Keeping their pistols pointed squarely at the cashier and his clerk, the daring robbers backed quickly toward the door.

As they passed out on the platform Gilson and Mortenson both sprang to their feet.

But they were too late.

The crowd surged in between them and the fleeing robbers.

They dared not fire for fear of hitting the people around them.

At length they fought their way through the crowd and reached the platform.

The robbers and the two bags of money were still in sight.

The men were making all possible speed toward the top-buggy, only twenty yards away.

Still standing upon the platform, the cashier raised his revolver and fired.

A little puff of dry earth arose just at the left of one of the robbers, but the flight continued.

Crack! crack! crack!

At the last shot the man with the dirty face staggered.

A second more, and he was in the buggy, with both bags of money at his feet.



The man in the long linen duster cut the rope with which the horse was tied, and the vehicle dashed rapidly away over B street bridge!

The train started slowly ahead, as though nothing had happened.

The men at the sand wagon had lifted their heads stupidly as the pistol shots reached their ears, and then stolidly resumed their work of loading the wagon.

There was absolutely no one in pursuit.

Once out of sight of the station, the robbers drew up a little.

"Are you hurt?"

Hill had seen his companion of the dirty face stagger, and now asked the question anxiously.

"Hit, but not wounded," said Boyd, with a smile. "It's hard shootin' through boiler plate."

"That's lucky," was the reply. "A wounded man always makes trouble; the people want to know too much about the accident."

"That was pretty easy work."

"Yes, rather, but the hardest part is still before us. It may be weeks before we can get the money out of Oakland."

"Well, we can keep still a long time on this money. Our friend who gave us the steer won't have his whirl to-day, I reckon!"

"No; it's safe to say that the ghost won't walk at the Judson Iron Works to-day."

"Did you ever see a man more scared than that cashier was?"

"I never did," replied Hill. "Now for a lightning change."

In a few moments the two robbers dropped their disguises in the buggy,

and two well-dressed business men drove carelessly along the public street.

"I'll get out somewhere on Adeline street with the money, and you drive toward Tenth street and hitch the horse," said Hill, after some distance had been traveled.

"All right," was the reply. "You go straight to the den, and I'll stroll in an hour or two later. You be on the watch so as not to keep me waiting at the door."

Before long Hill got out of the buggy carrying a basket on his arm.

The basket was heavy, but its contents were precious.

Fifteen thousand dollars in good, hard American coin!

The daring train robbery had been carried out exactly as it had been planned.

The Judson Company was poorer but fifteen thousand dollars, and the nervous robbers had money enough to enable them to lead luxurious lives for a long time.

Half an hour later Hill stood at the door of the place called "the den," looking into the wrinkled face of Mother Beers.

"Oh, you're here, are you?" grunted the old woman.

"Yes; take down the chain! I don't want to stand here in plain sight all day."

"Did you get the money?"

The woman could not restrain her curiosity even for a moment.

"Yes; hurry!"

"Got it in that basket?"

"For God's sake, make haste!"

"Is the money in the basket?"



"Yes, yes, you old jezebel! Open the door!"

After much muttering and many awkward attacks on the chain with clumsy belayers, the door was finally opened, and Hill hastened inside.

The old woman led the way to a small rear chamber, and Hill dropped the basket with a sigh of relief.

"Is there any one here?" he asked, wiping his face.

The woman shook her head.

"And Nell? Where is she?"

"Gone."

"The devil! Gone where?"

"She ran away the day you were here, and all on account of your strikin' Uncle been. She never would stand that."

"All on account of that ugly temper and heavy hand of yours, you had better savvy," rejoined Hill, with an oath. "What's going to be done now?"

"About what?"

The old woman did not seem to understand.

"About the girl, of course."

"Oh, I guess we'll get along without her. She wasn't much help, anyway—can't such a temper!"

"You're a fool!" hissed Hill. "She'll hear of this robbery, and have the police down on us before morning."

"I can't help it. When I went up to her room after you left that day she was gone."

"If you had treated her decently, she wouldn't have gone."

Hill mused a moment with a very ugly frown on his lumpy brows.

"Perhaps you'd better not stay here,"

suggested the old woman. "It may be dangerous."

"Of course it's dangerous! The girl knows me like a book, and she knows my lay. The moment she hears of this robbery she'll connect me with it."

"Then go."

"I've got to rest a little while. That basked weighed a ton the last block or two. Besides, I've got to wait for Boyd."

An hour passed slowly away, and Boyd did not make his appearance.

It was two o'clock.

The train had proceeded rapidly to Emery's, and the police of Oakland and San Francisco had been notified of the robbery by telegraph.

In both cities the detectives and many patrolmen in plain clothes were out in search of a clew.

At two o'clock the abandoned horse and buggy were found at the corner of Tenth and Filbert streets.

The officers were hot on the track of the robbers.

At four o'clock a knock sounded at the rear door of the den, and Mother Beers opened it cautiously, and admitted Boyd.

"This whole district is guarded," Boyd said, as soon as he was alone with Hill. "I was stopped twice on my way here. We must get out at once. This place, you know, has a shady reputation, and it will be searched almost immediately."

As he spoke a most imperative knock sounded on the door.

"And Nick Carter," he added, as the blows came thicker and heavier, "is in Oakland, and is directing the search!"

Hill sprang back with an oath.



## CHAPTER III.

## A COWARDLY BLOW.

Boyd had spoken the truth.

Nick Carter, the famous detective, whom the law breakers of a continent both respected and feared, was indeed in Oakland.

He had just completed a very difficult piece of work for the United States Government, and was about to leave for his home in New York, when news of the daring robbery reached him.

As he sat pondering over the matter in his room in the hotel a light knock sounded on the door.

Nick hesitated long enough to adjust the commercial-like side-whiskers and mustache he wore, and then stepped to the door.

He still kept up his custom of always meeting the public, when known to be Nick Carter, in some sort of disguise.

Of the thousands of people who had done business with him, only one or two—like Inspector Byrnes, of New York—knew how Nick Carter looked.

He did not like to be pointed out on the street and in public places as the famous detective. Besides, the crooks of the country were on the constant watch for him, and he did not care to live in an atmosphere of danger every moment of his life.

As the detective opened the door a uniformed officer extended a card, with a few lines written on it, evidently in great haste, and then stood feasting his eyes on the man he had heard so much about.

The card bore the name of Chief Thompkins, of the Oakland police force.

Nick shook his head as he saw Nick's name.

"I am sorry," he thought, running the case over in his mind.

He knew at once why the card had been sent.

"It's more work," he muttered, "I want to leave to-night."

Chief Thompkins was well known to the New York detective.

In fact, the two had been closeted together more than once during the latter's present visit to Oakland.

The chief had materially aided Nick in the case he had come there to work.

And so it was that when the chief's card reached Nick he did not feel like acting discourteously. On the card was written in the chief's well-known hand:

"May I come up? Important."

Nick stood leaning against the desk, casing, thinking fast.

"He wouldn't trust a call-boy with the case," said the waiting policeman, with a grin.

"And why not?"

"He was afraid the note wouldn't get to ye."

"Well, it got to me all right," said Nick, with a smile. "Present my compliments to the chief, and ask him to stop up."

A moment later the head of the Oakland police force stood in the room, shaking Nick warmly by the hand.

"You've got a bad case on hand," said Nick, as the chief threw himself into a chair.

"Yes," was the reply, "and I must confess that I'm square up a stump, too!"

"No clews?"



"No."

Nick smiled.

"It's all right for you to laugh," said the chief, "but just see what a scrape I'm in."

"It amused me," said Nick, "to think that your subordinates have reported no arrests."

"Yes, and the robbery took place in a crowded car in broad daylight! It's shocking!"

"Of course the men were disguised?" Nick eyed the chief keenly as he asked the question.

"One made no attempt at disguise, except in the matter of clothing, and one merely had his face blacked."

"The descriptions ought to be good."

"On the contrary they are very bad."

"Of course the men are not now wearing the clothes they wore on the train, so descriptions are not important"

"No, the duster, blouse, overalls and hats were found in the buggy."

"It looks to me," said Nick, "as though you had a case that needs a lot of hard work."

"That's just what I came to see you about."

Nick knew well enough what was coming, and looked the question he did not ask.

"I want you to help me out."

Nick looked at his watch.

"It's four o'clock now, and I ought to be on my way back at seven."

"A day or two will make no difference. Besides, we can gain about twenty-four hours by sending you back to New York by a lightning special. I'll do that if you will give me twenty-four hours of your time."

"Look here," said Nick, "I'd like to help you out. If I thought I could be of any use, I'd stay, but you must understand that I don't always meet with success."

"I wish you'd try. This robbery is one of the big events of the day, and the eyes of all the officers of the country are watching my force."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Nick. "You give me all the information regarding the case in your possession, and I'll poke around the city until morning. If by that time I discover any clew worth following personally, I'll stay; if not, I'll go on home."

"That is sufficient," said the chief, shaking the detective's hand heartily. "I certainly can ask no more."

"But I warn you," said Nick, "that if I do discover anything, it's more a case of luck than anything else."

After a long conference the chief arose to go.

"You now know as much about the case as I do," said he, pausing at the door, "and I understand fully that you know how to use the information better than I do. If you want help at any time, you know how to get it."

Left alone in his room, Nick walked the floor nervously while he grouped in his mind the information he had received.

"The worst of it all is," he thought, "that I've got to work alone. There is certainly no one here whom I can trust."

Half an hour later a seedy-looking man, who looked as though he had been on a week's drunk, left the detective's room in the hotel, and proceeded to mix with the people on the street.



"Buy a rose, sir?"

It was a very pleasant voice, and Nick paused a moment to pay for a flower and inspect the pretty flower-girl.

"If you want to know what's going on, and what's being said on the street, talk with the people who do business on the street."

This had long been one of Nick Carter's mottoes.

In New York he knew half the newsboys, bootblacks, and flower-girls in the city, although none of them knew that the pleasant old gentleman who frequently talked with them and made them timely presents was the world-famous detective, Nick Carter.

"Seems to be somethin' excitin' goin' on," said Nick, as he paid the girl for the rose.

She was a beautiful girl, of sixteen or seventeen. Her eyes were blue, her chin was a trifle heavy and resolute, for the rest of her girlish face, and she had an air of being familiar with street life. Her complexion would have been perfect but for a varied collection of freckles.

"Train-robbery," said the girl, briefly, in reply to Nick's seemingly careless remark.

"That's bad," said Nick, "who done it?"

"You tell me, and I'll get the reward," answered the girl, pertly.

Two drunken men came staggering down the street, shouting out a drinking song, and the girl stepped aside in order to allow them to pass.

"Hol' on, pard," said one of them, with a leer, "let's buy a rose! Mighty purty gal, eh?"

The girl drew farther back against the side of the building.

"Don't be 'fraid yer uncle, puss," said one of the fellows, making a staggering attempt to put his finger under the girl's chin; "yer sweeter'n peaches."

The girl made an effort to dodge away, but the drunken brute caught her by the arm.

"Give feller kiss, puss!"

For an instant the girl drew back in terror.

Then her face flushed painfully, and her handsome eyes flashed with rage.

She struck her persecutor a stinging blow in the face, and turned to run away.

"Hi, there, scratch-cat!"

As the brute spoke he thrust out his foot, and the girl, stumbling over it, fell heavily to the pavement.

It was with great difficulty that the dignant detective restrained himself.

He thought, however, that the girl would be able to take care of herself, and he remained quiet, although his fingers were itching to get at the loafer's throat. But the girl did not spring to her feet instantly, as he had expected, and the brute who had tripped her stooped over to catch her in his arms.

This was too much.

With a well-directed blow, the detective sent the lout spinning across the way where he brought up in the gutter.

He sprang up, full of fight, and the two men advanced upon the detective.

At that critical moment a scream from the girl reached the detective's ears.

Turning hastily about, he saw the two men struggling in the grasp of a wrinkled



st man, who was endeavoring to force her  
ong with her.

It was an easy matter for the muscular  
aggective to send both the drunken men  
er to the gutter, but a crowd was gather-  
."g, and he was anxious to get out of  
awght.

As the two men fell almost together, so  
ickly had the second blow followed  
e first, a policeman dashed into the  
owd.

"What's this?" he demanded, flourish-  
g his club; "who struck those men?"  
An officious bystander pointed at Nick.  
"There's the man," he said. "You'd  
tter arrest him, or he'll have the whole  
et knocked down. I'll bet he's a  
ize-fighter."

The policeman approached Nick warily.  
The flower-girl's screams still contin-  
d.

The old woman was dragging her  
f. way.

"Tell that woman to release the girl,"  
ick said, coolly, addressing the officer,  
nd I'll explain."

The policeman drew forth his hand-  
ffs.

"Put out yez hands!"

The detective drew back.

"No foolishness now!"

The officer meant business.

He raised his club to strike, but some  
e caught his arm.

It was the flower-girl, who had suc-  
eded in escaping from her persecutor.

She had not made her escape by vio-  
nt means.

She had only whispered a few words in  
e old woman's ear.

"Let him alone," the girl now said.

"Them men insulted me, an' he knocked  
'em down. Let him alone!"

But the policeman's temper was up.

He again raised his club.

There was only one thing for Nick to  
do.

He could not afford to waste any time  
at the police station.

He was there to solve the Oakland  
mystery.

As the policeman advanced, Nick  
glanced hurriedly around.

No other officer was in sight.

The next moment the policeman re-  
ceived a blow on the point of the jaw  
which rendered him unfit for active ser-  
vice for some minutes.

The crowd cheered. The average crowd  
is always good-natured when a policeman  
is getting the worst of an encounter.

But Nick was not destined to escape so  
easily.

As the crowd cheered, one of the men  
he had punished crept unnoticed behind  
him, and dealt him a heavy blow on the  
head with a paving-stone.

Nick staggered, and would have fallen  
but for the support of the girl's strong  
arm.

In the excitement the cowardly assail-  
ant crept away, and was soon out of sight.

"Come with me, please, you are hurt."

Nick heard the words but faintly.

He recognized the girl's voice, but  
everything seemed hazy and unstable.  
The crowd and the solid buildings on the  
street swayed before his eyes.

He summoned all his strength, all his  
will, and managed, with the help of the  
girl, to keep on his feet.

He realized vaguely that he was walk-



ing, steadily enough, through a small eating-house. He knew after a time that he was passing up a flight of stairs and along narrow, low-ceiled hallways.

Then he saw a bed spreading out before him, looking to his uncertain eyes like a vast expanse of foam-white sea.

He saw the wondering faces of women about him.

Then his splendid nerve gave way, and he sank upon the floor.

Almost any other man would have dropped, stunned by that awful blow, in the street.

When he regained consciousness a few moments later, the girl stood beside him. His false whiskers and mustache lay on the table!

The girl was regarding him with questioning eyes.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A COUPLE OF ALLEYS.

Nick Carter sprang to his feet. He was still weak and faint, but his will was stronger than any merely physical ailment.

"You may as well keep still," said the girl; "you can't get out."

Nick felt for his revolver.

It was gone.

"Why can't I get out?" he asked.

"'Cause we're locked in!"

"Oh, that's it!"

The detective smiled as he glanced around the frail structure.

The room was only up one flight, and the door leading from it could have been forced by one blow of his hand.

"Where is my pistol?"

"Big Nance took it."

"Who is Big Nance?"

"The woman wot locked us in."

"Did she see those things?"

Nick pointed toward the false beard and mustache.

The girl nodded.

"Why did she lock us in?"

"She wants the reward."

"Is there any reward for your capture?"

The young girl looked up with a startled expression on her handsome face.

"For my capture?"

She spoke slowly, as though afraid of the sound of her words, even on her own lips.

"Yes, what reward is there out for you? What have you been doing, little girl?"

"I'm not a little girl, an' I hain't been doin' nothin'. There ain't no reward out for me."

"Who is it for, then?"

"For you."

Nick dropped in a chair and laughed heartily, much to the astonishment of the young girl.

It was all clear now.

His disguise had caused the people of the house to suspect him of being one of the train robbers!

The police had undoubtedly been summoned to the place.

He must get away before help arrived.

It would never do to have a squad of officers take him before his friend the chief.

He would never hear the last of it.

Nick Carter stripped of his disguise and weapons and arrested in Oakland!

Not much!

"What 're ye laughin' at?"



The girl spoke as soon as her astonishment would permit her to do so.

"It's a way I have," said Nick, breaking out again.

"Ain't you one of the men wot robbed the train?"

The detective shook his head.

"They said you'd say that," said the girl, stepping between Nick and the door.

Nick readjusted his disguise, and, stepping to the low window, looked out.

A large crowd had collected in the street below.

"What are they doing down there?" he demanded. "Has that fool of a Big Nance, as you call her, been telling that she has one of the train-robbers cornered out here?"

"I s'pose so."

"Well, she hasn't."

Nick approached the girl with a smile.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I can't tell you who I am, or what I'm doing in this disguise, but I can assure you that I'm not one of the train robbers."

"Now, I'll give you one hundred dollars if you'll get my revolver and help me out of this place before the police come."

The girl shook her head.

"I got in here through helping you, didn't I?"

"I reckon."

"Then help me out."

"Wot was you doin' with Neil Hill 'other night?" the girl asked, abruptly.

"Who's Neil Hill?"

"The man they call the 'Convict.'"

"The Glendale train-robber?"

"Yes, that's him."

It was now Nick Carter's turn to regard

his companion with astonishment depicted on his face.

"Is he in town?" he finally asked.

"Oh, you know."

"Where did you see us together?"

"You didn't think I saw you at old Mother Beers', did you, now? Well, I did just the same."

"Luck at last!" thought Nick.

If that well-known train-robber, Neil Hill, was in town, surely he ought to know where to look for the perpetrators of the robbery on the Berkeley train.

"Who is Mother Beers?"

The girl looked up with a cunning smile, and remained silent.

"Well," thought Nick, "if she won't tell, I can learn what I want to know from the police. The first thing is to get out of here."

"Will you help me out?" he asked the girl.

"No."

"Will you remain quiet while I smash the door and get out the back way?"

"I don't care what you do," was the reply. "You stuck by me, and if you want to get out, I won't look."

"But I want you to go with me."

"Neil Hill will take me back to Mother Beers' if he catches me. I don't want to go back there."

"I won't let him."

"Suppose you couldn't help yourself? He's awful strong, Neil Hill is. You ought to know that."

"Still, I won't let him take you back. Now, will you go?"

The girl did not answer.

Nick was almost ready to give up in despair.



With this girl's help he could locate the train-robbers before morning.

Without her help he could do nothing.

He resolved to make one more effort.

"What's your name?" he asked, abruptly.

"Nell."

"Nell what?"

"No, not Nell What! I don't know what my other name is. I've always lived with Mother Beers."

"And you want to get away from her?"

"You just bet I do."

"Well, I live in New York. If you'll go with me now, I'll pay your fare there. They won't be apt to search for you in New York city, will they?"

"Will you, though?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll go."

"Where's my revolver?"

The girl produced it from beneath her apron, where she had kept her hand upon it during every instant of the conversation.

"She told me to shoot you if you tried to get away," she said, gravely.

"And you would have done it?"

"No. You stood by me, didn't you?"

"You're a brick, Nell!"

Nick put his shoulder against the door, and carefully pressed upon it until the lock bolt gave way.

It was growing dusk outside, and the hall-way in which he now found himself was quite dark.

As he stepped out the girl pulled him back.

"Wait," she said. "You don't know the way, and I do."

She opened a door on the opposite side of the passage and entered a small sleeping-room.

"There," she said, pointing to a small rear window, "what do you want better than that?"

Nothing, surely!

A shed-roof led from the very window casing to within four feet of the ground.

Behind the shed was a littered back yard.

Beyond the yard was an alley.

Beyond the alley was—the solution of the Oakland mystery!

"You'd better hurry," said the girl, darting in from the front room. "The police in the crowd down there in front now. They'll be up here directly."

Nick scrambled out, and turned back to assist the girl.

But she needed no assistance.

She sprang out like a cat, and was in the alley before Nick was well off the roof.

"Hurry," she whispered. "They're comin' around here to watch the back way. Jump over the fence there to the right!"

Nick did as he was requested without a word.

It was well that he did so!

A moment later three policemen in uniform entered the yard and advanced toward the house.

Nick laughed in his sleeve as he listened to what they were saying.

They were quarreling over the division of the reward which had been offered for the capture of the train-robbers.

As soon as the men stationed the



ives in the yard Nick crept along the  
gh fence and stepped into the alley.

The girl was by his side in a moment.  
She had hidden herself in a garbage

She took his hand as a girl of ten  
ght have done as they walked catiously  
ay.

From the first the girl had been a puz-  
e to him.

She was certainly sixteen or seventeen  
urs of age—almost old enough to be-  
ne a wife—but she seemed as innocent  
l frank as a child.

Her keen, blue eyes carried a worn,  
d look at times, but the next instant  
ne childish impulse would flash out  
e a gleam of sunshine on the waters of  
ark pool.

"She has been trained in the hard ways  
he street," thought Nick, but all her  
incts are womanly and beautiful, and  
heart is pure gold. She is too pure  
too pretty for this sort of life, and I  
nk I'll see what I can do for her"

"Where are you going?" asked the  
as they walked along.

"Why don't you always talk like that,  
in that tone?" Nick asked, without  
wering her question.

"Always talk like what?"

"Use good language."

"Oh, I only talk slang when I'm an-  
or excited. I've been to school lots, if  
's what you mean, and I've read al-  
lt every new book of any account  
's been printed this year."

Stick paused in his walk and looked at  
girl wonderingly.

"You're a queer mixture," he said.

"Oh, you ought to see me act! I like

to run and jump and all that, but I like  
to read plays and act out the parts best of  
all. It's awful jolly."

"Does Mother Beers know this?"

"You just bet she don't!"

"There you go again," said Nick, with  
a smile.

"Yes, I break out once in a while when  
I don't mean to. Where are you going?"

Nick thought a moment before he an-  
swered.

"I am going to find Neil Hill, Mother  
Beers, and the man you mistook me for.  
How does that suit you?"

"I don't like it."

"Why?"

"Because I don't like to think that  
you belong to that crowd."

"Well, I don't."

The girl drew her hand away, and  
stopped.

"Say," she said, half in anger, "I be-  
lieve you're a detective!"

"Would you help me capture the gang  
if I were?"

"No; they have been reasonably good  
to me."

"Will you show me where Mother  
Beers lives?"

"Yes, if you'll promise not to harm her  
or Uncle Ben. I'd fight for Uncle Ben!"

Nick gave the required promise, and  
after a long walk they reached the place.

"Now," said Nick, "I want to get in  
there, and see what I can find. Is there  
a back entrance?"

The girl pointed it out, and Nick, after  
telling the girl to wait for him at a hotel  
not far away, crept inside by means of a  
shed-roof which she pointed out.

"I'm doing this to help you catch



Hill," she said. "I'll shoot you if you harm Mother Beers or Uncle Ben!"

Nick raised the window, and crept inside, head first.

Before his feet left the window-sill he felt himself grasped by a pair of strong arms, and a mighty but silent struggle for the mastery began.

Two hours later the girl, tired of staying at the hotel, went back to the house, and stood watching the dark windows from the alley.

## CHAPTER V.

### NICK IN A TIGHT PLACE.

The police of Oakland and San Francisco were hunting high and low for the daring train-robbers.

The affair was the sensation of the hour.

Every train, every ferry-boat, every city street, and every country road was watched by vigilant policemen, who wouldn't have known one of the train-robbers from a side of leather.

To use a favorite expression of Nick Carter's, they were doing detective work with a brass band.

Men in uniform patrolled the section of the city where the horse and buggy had been left.

They stopped well-known citizens and business men, and asked them all sorts of impertinent questions.

As though train-robbers were in the habit of walking along streets thickly patrolled by officers in uniform!

The daily papers issued extra editions.

The news was telegraphed over the continent.

It was a great day for the regular policeman.

He took many extra drinks and strutted.

On his way back to the den Boyd stopped twice by the officers and mentioned.

He had no difficulty in giving an account of himself, for his imagination was rather above the average.

Had he been a quiet business man he might have been put to some trouble.

Being merely a train-robber, and the men they were in search of, the officers allowed him to pass on after only moderately annoyed.

The first act of the train-robbers, knocks came heavier and faster upon the door, was to rush to the room where fifteen thousand dollars had been seen and look about for a safer hiding place for it.

Mother Beers fluttered up and down the halls like an insane person.

"I shall be ruined—ruined!" moaned. "I shall be driven from the city!"

"Shut up, you old fool!" hissed. "Go to the door, and parley with them while we hide the money."

"And be sure you keep the chain added Boyd."

"The basement! Take it to the basement!" said the woman, as she went away toward the door.

The outlaws crept cautiously down the basement stairs with the two bags of money.

"We never should have hid it here," muttered Hill. "Next time will do my hiding in a church."

"They'll make a careless search."



"ay," said Boyd, reassuringly; "then all right here until the thing quiets down."

"I don't believe it. This is a suspicious place, and it will be watched right now."

"In one corner of the basement the robbers discovered a half barrel of soft soap."

"They dumped the bags of coin into this, so that they were well covered by the soap, and crept back up stairs."

"The officers were still cursing and banging at the door."

"The old woman pretended to be unable to fasten the chain, which did actually break in her hands."

"Now, then, all together, men!"

"The officers were tired of waiting."

"The door crashed in as the man in command spoke."

"Now, old woman," the leader said,

"the officers rushed into the house,

"I see what you've got in here that

"is so mighty careful of. Search the

"boys!"

"The officers sprang to do his bidding."

"Are you alone in the house?" demanded the officer in charge.

"The old woman hesitated."

"She was undecided what reply to make."

"There was no knowing whether Hill

"Boyd had made good their escape."

"It will be the worse for you if you

"don't tell me the truth!" thundered the

"man all alone."

"At that instant a pistol-shot came from

"the upper rooms."

"It be'll see about that."

"The officer dashed away as he spoke."

"The old woman stood trembling by the

"search

door, not daring to move in any direction."

"Another pistol-shot!"

"And another!"

"A sound of breaking doors."

"A crash of breaking glass."

"A perfect volley of pistol-shots, followed by a sound of the most horrible oaths."

"Two policemen sprang down the stairway, four steps at a time and dashed into the street."

"Once on the pavement, one turned to the right, and one to the left."

"They have escaped through one of the rear windows!"

"The old woman heard the exclamation with a joyful heart."

"With the outlaws out of the way, there would be very little proof against her."

"Well, you accomplished your purpose," said the officer in charge, approaching her with an ugly look on his face.

"Mother Beers stared, at him stupidly."

"Oh, you needn't look so innocent about it! You kept us waiting at the door until the robbers got away with the booty!"

"The outlaws had indeed misled the officers in this regard."

"Just before making for the window, when that seemed the only course left for them to pursue, they had made up small bundles of whatever they could lay their hands on in the room."

"As they sprang out with these in their hands, the officers naturally supposed that they were taking the stolen money away with them."

"The object of the robbers in doing this



was to prevent a thorough search of the house being made.

The move was a success.

The officers followed the outlaws, and did not make a close search of the place.

Two policemen were left to guard the house.

Mother Beers was locked in one of the smaller rooms, and closely guarded.

The sounds of pursuit died away, and the two officers settled down for a quiet time.

One of them had a suspicious-looking flask, and one had a pocketful of cigars.

As they enjoyed themselves after their own fashion, night came on and the rooms grew dark.

"Suppose we have a light?" said one of the men.

"What for? To warn the robbers away?"

"Oh, to make things more comfortable-like."

"Well, you can get one if you want to, but I shall have nothing to do with it."

"You're a mule!" retorted the other, angrily. "I only wish I knew where to find a lamp."

"There was one in one of the rear rooms up stairs."

"You stay here, and I'll go and get it."

At the head of the stairs the officer halted and whispered back to his companion:

"Come up here. There's something going on."

The second officer lightly ascended the stairs, and then both stood still and listened.

Light steps came from the lean-to on the side, and a form darkened the window.

One of the officers sprang forward, and then came a silent struggle for the victory.

As the men grappled upon the floor the second officer struck a light.

"Hello!" he shouted, as the light flared up. "Let go, there! You've got the wrong man!"

The policeman released his hold, and Nick Carter sprang to his feet.

He was known to both of the officers.

They had been detailed by the chief to help him in his government case.

Nick broke into a laugh.

"This beats anything I ever saw," said. "We both ought to have a nose made of a bull's ear!"

In a short time Nick was nearly as informed as to all that had taken place in the house that afternoon.

He smiled as the officers told about the robbers carrying the money away from them, but said nothing.

"You go back down stairs," he said, "and place that lamp in the sitting-room so things will look as usual. Then tell the old woman in full sight of the window, and set her to knitting or sewing, or something of that sort."

"And then?"

"Remain where you can watch the motion Mother Beers makes, and when you can jump for the front door if a signal comes from the outside. I have the idea that some of the gang will be here to-night."

"Are you going to stay with us?"

"Yes; I want to have a quiet night through the house."



to do you think the money is still  
window"

ard, don't think anything about it. I'm  
the thing for the men, not the money."

But there's a big reward——"

floor understand. Well, if I find the  
ey in the house, you shall have the  
ght find. Will that do?"

got the officers departed to execute the de-  
ve's orders, and Nick lit his dark  
holdern and proceeded to examine every  
of space in the house.

office last he came to the basement.

chine of the first things to attract his at-  
on was the half-barrel of soft soap.

he bent over and examined the earth  
it it very carefully. There were many  
y footprints in the loose earth.

they were not the small footprints of  
d woman.

The money, or some other valuable  
der, is probably in there," the detec-  
thought. "I wonder, now, whether  
d better turn the stuff out and have a  
p?"

he a moment he decided not to do so.  
ng-r he robbers might return, and catch  
hen of his light while he was making the  
he ination.

g or e looked carefully about the place for  
e entrance other than the one from  
ch e floor above.

nd v ere was none in sight.

oor i at he did not look sharp enough.

I ha st under the stairs was a large hogs-  
be l, into which he did not look.

had he done so, he would have seen  
us? the side toward the plank wall of the  
niet ment had been cut away, and that  
hogshead was merely the entrance to

a secret passage leading from the base-  
ment to the woodshed in the back yard.

"I may as well stay here as anywhere,"  
thought the detective, closing his light  
and stationing himself by the rough stair-  
way.

He stood with his back toward the se-  
cret entrance.

Save for a faint ray of light creeping in  
from a street lamp outside, through a small  
front window, the basement was en-  
shrouded in darkness.

A person standing at the foot of the  
stairs would be directly in a line with the  
front window, looking from the secret en-  
trance.

As Nick stood there a heavy form crept  
through the secret passage, and a head  
was raised above the level of the hogs-  
head.

The detective's head was clearly out-  
lined against the one dimly lighted pane  
of the front window.

He was only a short distance from the  
new arrival—almost within reach of his  
hand.

A sound in the darkness attracted his  
attention, and he sprang hastily backward.

As he did so he came in contact with a  
pair of muscular arms.

For the second time that night he  
found himself engaged in a hand-to-hand  
struggle with an unknown opponent.

He was getting the best of the encoun-  
ter when he was dealt a vicious blow from  
behind, and fell senseless to the earth.  
Up stairs the two policemen sat dozing in  
their chairs.

When Nick regained consciousness a  
dim light was burning.

Two men sat by the soap barrel count-



ing gold and silver coins and placing them in two shining heaps.

The robbers were dividing the stolen money before his very eyes.

"If we had known of that passage before," Hill said, in a whisper, "we might have saved ourselves that run. We were lucky to strike Bob an' get the pointer about it. That's what the old woman meant when she cried out for us to go to the basement, probably."

"Listen! Some one is creeping through the passage!"

Hill turned down the light and crept forward.

There was a scuffle, and then Hill dragged some one forward and turned on the light.

It was Nell.

"You needn't be so mighty rough," she said. "Where's Mother Beers, an' what you doin' here? This ain't your basement. It's ours, an' don't you forgit it!"

"Hush," said Hill, with an oath, then turning to Boyd, he added: "What shall we do with the jade?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### CAUGHT THE WRONG MAN.

"For one thing," said the girl, "you needn't be so free with your fingers. You hurt my arm! Let go!"

"Shut up, you she-devil!" hissed Hill. "I've a great mind to shut your wind off."

"You'd better not try it. Let go, or I'll scream."

Hill, comforting himself with a coarse oath, released the girl's arm, but still

stood over her with a pistol raised threateningly in his hand.

The girl seemed to pay not the slightest attention to the man's manner or his weapon.

"What you fellers doin' here, anyway?" she demanded, casting her eyes about the dim basement. "Who do you think that money belong to?"

Nick Carter, lying in the shadow with his eyes half closed, but with all his senses alert, could not make up his mind whether the girl had discovered his presence.

If she had she gave no indication of the fact.

"Where'd you come from?" demanded Hill, in a moment. "You ran away six days ago, didn't you?"

"None o' your business," said the girl sullenly. "If Mother Beers want to know I'll tell her. Where is she? Have you been hurtin' Mother Beers?"

"She's up stairs, for all I know," replied Hill, wholly at a loss what course to pursue in regard to the girl. "The girl may be up there, too. We've been chased away from here once to-day."

"You'd get chase away agin if you go my way," replied the girl. "You're not fresh."

"Come, come," broke in Boyd, "stand there foolin' with that kid all day. Pick up your stuff an' get out. He can pose it's every man for himself now."

"What shall we do with her?" asked Hill.

"Put her to sleep, so we can get her here without takin' any chances. I don't like the idea of her sneakin' in here and catchin' sight of this stuff."

Nell sprang back as Boyd spoke.



in a defiant attitude at the foot of stairs.

"If you come near me," she shouted, "I'll advance toward her, 'I'll m!"

The outlaw drew back, and in a moment both men were busily engaged in dividing the proceeds of the daring robbery away in small leather bags with which they had provided themselves.

"You'd better leave some o' that here for rent and the wear and tear on my nerves," said the girl, seating herself on the stairs and grinning at the outlaws in an exasperating manner. "You think I don't know where it came from, but I

The detective watched in vain for some clue from the girl that she had discovered her position.

"I wonder if she'll sit there like a queen on a log," he thought, "and see the robbers walk away with that money?"

She certainly looked as if she meant to do everything. Nick was in a rage.

Once or twice he was on the point of going out in the hope of attracting the attention of the officers he knew to be so near at hand.

But prudence restrained him.

There was no hope of success in such a plan.

And as he was it would be easy for the outlaws to silence his cries and escape with the money before the sleepy police could be made to realize what was all on.

Such a course, then, would only endanger his life.

The outlaws believed him to be still unconscious, else they would never have followed the course they had.

His arms were bound to his sides by an iron coil of rope, which was wound round his body.

Even an ordinary bond, or even from a pair of handcuffs, he might have, by al-

most superhuman exertion, released himself, but from such a tie-up as this never.

"I don't believe you've given Mother Beers a cent of money for all the trouble you've made her," said the girl, after a short silence. "I'm goin' up stairs an' ask her before you get out of the house with it."

The girl started to mount the stairs as she spoke.

"Stop!"

The voice was imperative, and was emphasized by the click of a pistol.

"Whats' up now?"

The girl stopped and turned back.

"You stay where you are."

"But I want to see if——"

"Knock her down!" broke in Boyd.

"Knock her down yourself, if you want it done."

Boyd sprang forward.

Before he reached the place where the girl had been standing the girl was at the top of the stairs with her hand on the door leading into the rooms above.

"Come back!"

"The police are up there!"

Both men spoke in a breath.

They did not realize how near the truth they were getting.

Nick almost gave up hope.

By this time the money was all packed in the bags, and the outlaws were ready to take their departure.

The girl stood by the stair door without attempting to open it.

Boyd advanced to where Nick was lying, and pushed him roughly with his foot.

"He got a hard thump, I guess," muttered the ruffian. "I suppose it's just as well to leave him here."

"Yes," said Hill, "he didn't see enough to do us any harm."

Nick would have given a year's income to have been free from the folds of that rope.

The robbers now stood at the foot of



the stairs with the straps of the hand-bags thrown over their shoulders.

"Come away from that door!" hissed Hill. "The people up there will hear you!"

"I don't care if they do. I'm goin' to call Mother Beers before you get away with that money."

With an exclamation of rage, Boyd sprang up the stairs.

Hill stood watching him with a pistol in his hand.

For the time neither one gave a thought to their prisoner.

Nick felt one loose end of the rope touching his hand.

He gave a quick motion with his body, and was overjoyed to see that it fell back.

The rope had not been tied.

The men had been too eager to get at their plunder.

Besides, they believed the man they had captured to be unconscious.

As Nick rolled cautiously over and over he felt the rope falling away from him.

In a very short time he would be ready to face the desperate train-robbers.

The fact that he was unarmed did not count for much with the determined man.

The policemen were waiting up stairs, and he would soon have plenty of help.

As Boyd sprang up the creaking staircase, Nell opened the door and called out:

"Mother! Mother Beers!"

Nick heard a noise as of some one getting clumsily on his feet, and then for an instant all was quiet.

Both Hill and Boyd were awaiting developments.

The last coil of rope dropped from Nick's shoulders, and he sprang lightly to his feet.

The light still burned dimly by the place where the treasure had been divided.

"What's up there?"

The question was asked in a gruff, masculine voice.

"Mother Beers! There's some one in the basement."

Boyd sprang back down the stairs, both men made for the secret passage.

Nick waited only an instant for the operation of the patrolmen he had left in the rooms above.

That was one instant too long.

The officers, who had started to move, dropped back into their chairs with a laugh.

Of course the person in the basement could be no other than the detective who had started out to look over the house.

As the two outlaws bounded toward the secret exit, Nick sprang forward.

The rope which had been wound round him still lay at his feet. With one bound caught in the coils he fell heavily on the floor.

Boyd, standing in advance of Nick, fired the very entrance to the passage, with an oath and fired two quick shots in the direction from which the sound proceeded.

One of the bullets sailed haphazardly over Nick's head.

The other struck and extinguished the lamp.

"Hurry! They are killing some one down there."

The girl's voice and the pistol roused the sleepy patrolmen to action.

Grasping their pistols they sprang up the stairs into the inky darkness of the basement.

By this time Nick was on his feet. He could hear the outlaws forcing their way through the secret passage.

With a call to the officers ahead, he hastened on in pursuit of the fleeing robbers.

One of them was but a few feet in advance of him.

He could hear him panting for breath as he lugged the heavy hand-bags through the narrow passage.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE HAND-BAGS MISSING.

ing unencumbered, Nick was able to  
me old much more rapidly.

was about to seize the man in ad-  
e stair and take his chances in the strug-  
passa which would be sure to follow, when  
t for t himself was seized from behind.

had l ring a light! I have one of 'em!"

ng. was the gruff voice of the officer.

ted to k struck out viciously, but the  
girl's while able to cling to the detec-  
hairs w feet, was still beyond reach of his

lease me!" shouted Nick. "You  
ne, bas holding the detective, and not one of  
detectiv bbers."

the ho the officer held on, notwithstanding  
d tow s struggles and hasty words of ex-  
ard. ion, until a flood of light from a  
wound in his brother officer's hands re-  
ith on the true condition of affairs.

heavily beg your pardon, sir."

red k barely restrained himself from  
ce of kg the man down with his fist.

ssage, ever mind now," he said. "Throw  
quick sy hat and loan me your revolver.  
he sou is no time to lose."

ere they here?" asked the officer,  
d harly.

should say so," broke in the girl,  
nguisl they divided more'n a bushel of  
nght right there on the floor."

ng soney've gone for good now, I guess,"  
ick, "money and all."

pisto detective hastened through the  
to act-like passage, crept up to the rear  
y spran and listened.

arknesrst all was still.

in the sound of heavy footsteps has-  
down the alley came to his ears.

s forc steps advanced rapidly for a mo-  
age. and then stopped.

cers al at's strange," thought Nick. "I  
ne flee if one of them got hurt in getting

ew feet

ng for  
d-bag t

"That's what might be called a mighty  
close shave."

"I should say so."

"Who would have thought the cops  
had sense enough to hang around the den  
in that way?"

"It is generally known, I suppose, that  
Mother Beers don't run any Christian as-  
sociation in that house."

"That's all right. I can understand the  
first search. The house is not far from  
where the horse was found, and was raid-  
ed the same as all other shady places in  
the vicinity. The officer in plain clothes  
in the basement is what I can't under-  
stand."

"Well, I think that girl Nell stood in  
with that part of the play."

"She hadn't been home in two days.  
How should she know anything about our  
being there?"

"I shall always believe she took that  
cop there, just the same. He seemed to  
have no connection with the officers up  
stairs."

"Well, the officers up stairs helped us  
out all right enough. That fellow down  
stairs would have had one of us sure, only  
for their mistaking him for one of us."

"You're right there, old man. I hope  
we're well rid of the whole gang now."

"I hope so, but I'm not so sure about  
it."

"Have you heard or seen anything?"

"Well," replied Hill, "when I stopped  
in the alley to feel my way through that  
cursed carriage house, so as to get  
through to the next street, I thought once  
or twice that some one was following  
me."

"Why didn't you turn back then? It  
was only man to man there, and it would  
have been a mighty good job if you could  
have finished that cursed spy right there."

"Yes, and that would have brought out



the whole neighborhood. Mighty fine place for a pistol shot or two, that!"

"Perhaps you are right."

It was nearly midnight, and Hill and Boyd were sitting in their room high up in an Oakland hotel.

Before them lay the evening papers, containing full reports of the great train-robbery.

"I see by the papers," said Hill, with a smile, "that the officers have at last found a clew."

"What's that?"

"Oh, we have been seen driving a gray horse away out beyond B street."

"Well, let them look out that way if they want to. We must be out of this long before daylight."

"You know what I think about that," said Hill.

"Well?"

"We ought to remain quietly in the city until things quiet down a little."

"That's a fool idea."

"Why?"

"Because," said Boyd, walking the floor in excitement, "they now have a description of us and our hand-bags. They know we are carrying the coin with us, and how we are carrying it. You think now that we were followed from the den?"

"Yes, I believe we'd have had trouble getting here if we hadn't struck that cab mighty lucky."

"How do you know we were not followed here?" demanded Boyd, suddenly.

"I don't know."

Boyd arose from the chair into which he had just thrown himself, and carefully inspected the fastenings of the door.

Then he walked to the one window in the room, opened the inside blinds, and looked out:

An exclamation of rage burst from his lips.

"What's up now?" asked Hill, stepping to his side.

"Look there!"

Boyd pointed down to the white ring and the windows of a large court.

"And we ordered an outside room."

"Yes; I have made use of fire."

before now," answered Boyd, excitedly. "You're losing your nerve, I guess," said Hill, with a smile. "I never told you to act in this way before."

"I don't like the looks of things here," replied Boyd, as he closed the blinds and walked back to the table.

"Look under there," said Hill, pointing to the two hand-bags half covered by the drooping edge of the table.

"Don't that put a little courage in you?"

"Yes," was the reply. "It's a good haul, but it's the kind of a haul that will be hunted down hard."

"Let them hunt," said Hill, sleeplessly. "I'm going to bed."

"To bed! Great Heaven! do you mean to say that you can sleep at such a time?"

"Like a top."

Hill stepped forward, and turned on the gas preparatory to getting ready for bed.

The next moment Boyd caught hold of Hill.

"What's that?"

Both men listened intently for some time.

"I hear nothing."

"There!"

In the hush that followed the sound of an opening window came to their ears.

The sound was so close that it seemed as if the window of their own room were being moved.

"You'd better go to bed," said Hill. "Some lodger has been doing what he did a moment ago, opening his blinds and looking out in the court."

"Go to bed if you want to," said Boyd with an oath; "I'm going down for some whisky."

"I wouldn't mind having a drink myself."

"Well, one of us had better sleep."



the white ring up a flask, I suppose. Have  
 e court. ay change in your pockets?"  
 tside room not a cent. I gave the cabman the  
 of fire es had. Get some silver out of one of  
 oyd, excites."  
 erve, I got down on his knees on the  
 "I never and opened one of the bags without  
 ore." g it from under the table.  
 of things en he arose again he saw that Hill  
 the blind posing very quietly in bed.  
 I lock the door and take the key  
 said Hill, ne," he said. "You act so deuced  
 half con that a man might sneak in here  
 the table-sug off the money without your  
 courage in ng anything about it."  
 "It's a r t your whisky," growled Hill from  
 nd of a had, "and don't wear out your chin  
 d." g."  
 said Hill, ad been a hard day for Hill, and he  
 ed." red and very sleepy.  
 en! do you ooner had the door closed upon his  
 at such a le partner in crime than he turned  
 k to the dimly burning gas jet and  
 and turned o a light sleep.  
 getting re heard the noises of the great hotel  
 on about him, but they seemed to  
 d caught h ogether.  
 e of them seemed individual.  
 intently fo length, after what seemed a very  
 time, he heard the key turned in  
 ck and a footstep advanced to his  
 .  
 owed the so re's your whisky."  
 e to their reached out his hand mechanically,  
 se that it e bottle and sat up in bed.  
 ir own room t some light?"  
 ould say not. There's plenty of  
 bed," said r this sort of business, I guess."  
 u doing w he paused, with his hand still on  
 pening his tle.  
 court." at's the matter with you?" he de-  
 nt to," said. "You act as if you brought  
 going do ore liquor in your hide than you  
 he bottle."  
 ving a dri handing him the bottle his com-  
 had thrown himself across the foot  
 d better sted.  
 e position he now occupied it was

impossible for Hill to see more than a faint outline of him.

"Any excitement down stairs?"

Hill asked the question as he placed the bottle back in the hand of the prostrate man.

"Nothing only a man bowling up in the bar-room."

"He's a good one if he gets the start of you any. You can't even talk straight."

"You're right about that. I'm goin' to get good an' full before mornin'."

"Well there'll be a row if you keep me awake, that's all. You'd better come to bed right now."

As Hill turned his face to the wall again he saw that his companion was bending over toward the floor as though taking off his shoes.

"That's right," he grunted, sleepily. "You can have your drunk after you get little ground between yourself and B street station."

"I suppose that stuff is all right where it is?"

"Of course. It's just as safe under the table as it would be anywhere in the room."

"All right. I got some gold pieces out by mistake. I guess I'd better put them back."

"Well, hurry up. I'm sleepy, an' I can't sleep if you sit there chinning all night."

Hill heard as through a mist, his companion moving about the room.

Then the noise stopped.

Was that a noise at the door again?

No; only Boyd staggering about.

Was that the sound of coin clinking together?

Probably, for Boyd wished to replace the gold pieces.

Surely that was a movement of the lock!

Hill, sleepy as he was, arose to a sitting position, and glanced suspiciously around.



His companion was moving from the table toward the door of the room.

"What are you doing?"

There was no answer for a moment.

"What's up? Why don't you answer?"

"Keep still! I'm going after more whisky."

"You're drunk enough now."

"This is for morning."

"All right! Hurry up! It can't be far from morning now. Mighty little rest we'll get to-night."

The door closed, and the key was turned on the outside.

Hill did not go to sleep again.

Thoroughly awake, he lay listening to every sound.

Boyd seemed absent a long time.

Had he been captured?

No; for Boyd would resist to the death, and there had been no sound of fighting outside.

At last he could remain quiet no longer.

He sprang from his bed, turned up the gas, and sat down to wait.

It was pleasanter so than lying in bed counting the moments and listening.

In a moment Hill's eyes fell upon the table, and he sprang to his feet with an oath.

The bottle Boyd had started away to get filled lay there in plain sight.

Filled with a sudden fear, the outlaw dropped to the floor, and threw both hands under the table.

The hand-bags containing the money were gone!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MAN ON THE WINDOW BENCH.

The rage of the man was simply ungovernable. He raved up and down the room like a maniac.

"No wonder Boyd was nervous and couldn't sleep—plotting a dirty scheme like this!"

At length Hill hastily drew his clothes.

He had no idea that Boyd would

His purpose was to hunt him down and shoot him.

When he stood in the room drew when he entered he threw aside the covers of the bed to secure his revolver.

They were gone!

Then he remembered his companion's strange actions at the time he had given him the whisky.

Hill sat down on the edge of the bed in despair.

It seemed to him as though nothing he could say or do would do full justice to the occasion.

"I wonder," he thought, "if it is part of Boyd's scheme to turn me over to the police?"

As he sat on the bed wondering and planning he heard a key grate the lock!

It was evidently in unsteady haste that it did not at once shoot back the bolt.

Hill sprang to his feet, and approached softly to the door, taking a position from which he could not at first be seen by anyone entering.

He heard muttered curses uttered in a maudlin tone.

Boyd was keeping his promise.

He was in a fair way to get his money full before morning.

As the sound of the man's voice came to him Hill started back with a gasp, driving the blood from his face.

Surely that was Boyd, and yet it was not the voice he had heard in the room a few moments before.

"I've been tricked, I guess," he muttered, still standing with his back to the wall, "and the deuce will be to know when Boyd finds out that the money is gone."

By this time the door was opened and Boyd lurched in, very drunk and very ugly.



"a' you stann' there for?" he de-  
 cl, catching sight of Hill.

"Where have you been?"

asked the question for want of  
 ing better to say.

"a bowlin' up! Got anythin' to say  
 that, eh?"

"Why did you leave the door un-  
 locked?"

"In't."

"Have you've been up to some trick-  
 Where's that money?"

"I was assuming the offensive in  
 shape."

"Half sobered by the remark,  
 he fell on the floor, and crawled under  
 the door."

"If," he said, crawling out from be-  
 neath the overhanging spread, "I believe  
 something about that. Where's  
 the money? Get it, quick."

"Where's your own gun?"

"He shrugged his shoulders, and held  
 empty hands."

"Have you been touched?"

"A bartender will give them to me  
 tomorrow."

"You're a deuce of a train robber!" al-  
 luded Hill. "We're in nice shape  
 for a cop should walk in on us."

"Where's your gun?"

"He with the money."

"A fierce, desperate look sprang into  
 his face."

"Work here," he said, "you know  
 nothing about all this. What devil's  
 brought you up to?"

"Yet, with drunken carelessness, had  
 the key on the outside of the door."

"He stepped forward, secured it, and  
 locked the door on the inside, making the  
 bag still more secure by shooting a  
 bolt just above the lock."

"There is no time to waste in chin,"

"There's more to this than  
 on the surface."

"What are you going to do?"

"He went out into the court in some way."

"And then what."

"Pass through some of the lower rooms  
 and get into the street."

"And lose all that money?"

"You may stay and search for the  
 money if you want to. In my opinion it's  
 in the hands of the officers before this."

"How did they get it?"

"Came in while you were away, of  
 course."

"Were you sleep?"

"Nearly so. The fellow, whoever he  
 was, acted and talked so much like your-  
 self, that I paid no attention to his bump-  
 ing about. There's one good point about  
 him," Hill added, with a grin. "He  
 brought up the whisky you went after."

"And gave you a drink?"

"Of course."

"Well, that beats the devil!"

"Now, then," said Hill, "you turn out  
 the gas and I'll see if I can get out by  
 means of that roof pipe. It's risky, but I  
 believe the room is watched from the  
 hall-way."

Boyd did as requested, and Hill opened  
 the blinds.

As Boyd advanced toward the window  
 in the darkness he heard an exclamation  
 of rage, followed by a low laugh.

The next instant Hill passed him, and  
 dashed madly against the door.

"Throw up your hands."

"You needn't bother about that," said  
 Boyd. "You haven't left us anything to  
 put in them!"

"Let out the gas."

"I'll see you further first."

"Never mind, then; I guess I can fix  
 it."

The next moment the strong rays of a  
 dark lantern flashed into the room.

By its light the train-robbers saw Nick  
 Carter sitting composedly on the window-  
 sill with the lantern in one hand and a  
 heavy revolver in the other.

A long rope was still about his body.



He had descended from one of the upper windows.

Hill started back.

Then realizing that resistance would be worse than useless, he threw himself into a chair, and folded his arms across his breast.

"That ain't the first time you've had a rope around you this night," he said, grimly.

"You're right about that," said Nick, stepping into the room, still keeping the men covered, and lighting the gas.

"Now, then," he added, taking out a pair of handcuffs, "I want to say right now that I'm here alone, and that I can't afford to have any foolishness. The first man that makes a break will be killed. Hold out your hands!"

There was a ring in the nervy detective's voice that convinced the men that he meant business, and the loaded weapon in his hand was not a pleasant thing to look at.

With sullen glances at each other they obeyed orders, and were soon securely handcuffed.

Nick touched the electric button.

"If you had done that when you wanted your whisky," he said, turning to Boyd, "it wouldn't have been so easy for me to have made the capture."

"It all amounts to the same thing," was the reply. "You had us located in the room, and you had the entire police force of the city at your disposal. How did you follow us here?"

"That was easy enough. I caught up with you at the carriage house where you left the alley and made a run for it."

"How did you know where we were coming?"

"Oh, I heard you tell the cabman."

"You're a devil anyhow," said Hill. "I'd like to have you back in that basement about five minutes."

"I suppose so," said Nick, coolly.

A knock came on the door.

Nick opened it and admitted the boy in the uniform of the hotel.

"Go to the clerk," Nick said, "and tell him that I have the two traitors here under arrest. Tell him to get for two policemen, and to send the chief of police at once. Turn these men over to him."

The urchin's eyes stuck out of his saucers for a moment, and then he went away.

"You've got the money, I can find," said Hill.

"Yes. You came near catching me, too. When you sat up in bed ready to shoot."

"And you've got my pistol," said Boyd.

"The clerk has them. You're a bit too drunk to have such playthings on you."

"You must have mighty long legs to be up here getting the money without there bluffing me at the same time," said Boyd. "If I hadn't been afraid of drawing attention myself and getting arrested," he added, "there'd have been a shooting scrape down there in the room when you pulled your gun. I asked the bartender to take my drink while you had the drop. Why didn't you arrest me then?"

"Oh, I wanted to do it all in a slick like. I knew you didn't want to shoot, and that you would come here after the money."

There was a sound of feet walking away, and two policemen walked into the room.

"The chief will be here in a minute," said the clerk, who had followed them in. "He was just going home."

The joy and astonishment may well be imagined when they went into the room and found the two men under arrest and the money.

"You have done a great



he exclaimed, shaking Nick  
mitted by the hand.  
e hotel've got a couple of great bumps  
Nick said, too," said Nick, with a  
two tra  
him to ef gave orders for the removal  
o send, robbers, and passed down stairs  
once. detective.

im." But the money in the hotel safe  
stuck rning," he said. "Of course  
d then a good share of it by way of

ey, I can fix that as you please," said  
m off for New York in the

r catch'  
in bed truck your clew, eh?" said the  
h a smile. "You know you said  
y pistok around for one until morn-

You k a great streak of luck," said  
playth and here's the name and address  
g girl I want you to get away  
hty lo her Beers and use like a queen  
money hear from me. She's the one  
same ti me the clew. She's a brick,

afraid l be as you say."  
and ge now I'm going to bed for an  
e'd ha go," said Nick, "and as I shall  
there i ou in the morning, I'll bid you  
your ow."  
ke my o shook hands warmly, and  
Why ed on to his room.

it all o the Great Oakland Mystery  
ou did d.

[THE END.]

ext number of the Nick Carter  
feet will contain "Nick Carter's  
walked; or, The Crime of the  
Highbinders," by the author of  
ere in arter."

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- 153—A Bite of an Apple.
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